

Florence Township Council Regular Session 1/13/21

Florence, New Jersey
January 13, 2021

The Florence Township Council held a regular meeting on the above date in the Municipal Complex, 711 Broad Street, Florence, New Jersey. Members of the public were invited to attend the meeting electronically, in person attendance was not encouraged.

The meeting was called to order by Council President Garganio at 7:00 p.m. Council President Garganio led the Salute to the Flag.

The Opening Statement was read by the Township Clerk: This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice was published in the Burlington County Times on January 10, 2021; placed on the Township website, and given to the Trenton Times for information.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Upon roll call the following were found to be present:

Present: Frank Baldorossi (via Zoom), Paul Ostrander, Jerry Sandusky, Dave Woolston, Bruce Garganio

Also Present: Mayor Craig H. Wilkie, Stephen Fazekas, Township Administrator, Kelly Grant, Township Solicitor; Nancy L. Erlston, Township Clerk; Jenise Silinsky, Deputy Township Clerk

Absent: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Session of November 4, 2020
- Regular Session of December 2, 2020
- Regular Session of December 9, 2020
- Regular Session of December 16, 2020

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Sandusky to approve the minutes as submitted. Voice vote – all ayes.

FINANCIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Motion of Sandusky, seconded by Woolston to receive and file the following reports. Voice vote – all ayes.

- Township Clerk's Monthly Report for November 2020 and December 2020
- Tax Collector's Monthly Water & Sewer Report for November 2020
- Municipal Treasurer's Cash Reports and Budget Reports for November 2020
- Municipal Court Administrator's Report for December 2020
- Tax Collector's Monthly Tax Reports and Water & Sewer Report for December 2020

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Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to approve the **Treasurer's Bill List**.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Ostrander, Sandusky, Woolston, Garganio

NOES: None

ABSENT: None Unanimous vote – Motion carried

REGULAR CORRESPONDENCE

A. Letter from Judy King requesting permission to hold Florence Historical Society monthly meetings at the 3rd Street Firehouse.

B. Florence Township Library Association Annual Report

Motion of Sandusky, seconded by Baldorossi to approve the correspondence. Voice vote – all ayes.

APPLICATIONS

None at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President Garganio opened the meeting to the public at this time.

Seeing no one wishing to be heard, it was the Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to close the public portion of the meeting. Voice vote – All ayes.

RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-40

Deny Request to Release Maintenance Bond, Pulte Homes, Oak Mill

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-41

Approve Renewal of 2020-2021 ABC License Fine Foods & Spirits, Inc.

It was the Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Sandusky to approve Resolution Nos. 2021-40 through 2021-41.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Ostrander, Sandusky, Woolston, Garganio

NOES: None

ABSENT: None Unanimous vote – Motion carried

ORDINANCES

None at this time.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND OFFICERS

None at this time.

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REPORTS: ADMINISTRATION

Mayor

Mayor Wilkie mentioned that there were a few resignations and, as a result, on the Planning Board Tara Sandusky moved from Alternate #2 up to the Alternate #1 position, and on the Environmental Commission Melanie Mieczkowski who was Alternate #1 will be moved to At Large Commissioner expiring 12/31/21, and Michelle Ryan-Krzykalski who was appointed to the Alternate #2 spot will be moved to Alternate #1 expiring 12/31/22.

Mayor Wilkie spoke about the Rope Stretcher building at the Roebling Steel site and how, when he became mayor in 2012, he learned what was going to be happening there. There had been conversations about moving the Rope Stretcher and other important fixtures into a building closer to the steel site. He just got word today that finally, the EPA has indicated that they are moving forward with the design. He shared a map of the site with Council and explained what each building is, where they are located and where they plan to move the important parts of the structure into a larger building that will go onto that site, which will be closer to the Roebling Steel site.

There are also plans to clean up the site. Once they move the large structures that are inside the big building, the two buildings will be cleaned up and/or demolished and then the museum will be responsible for the property. He was told that the mill yard will get cleaned up and a pathway put in and this is the first he is seeing an actual design for it.

Council President Garganio asked if there was any type of drawing received showing the size of the building or type of building or what it is going to look like. Will it match the Roebling brick?

Mayor Wilkie said that it is supposed to match and be similar to the museum itself.

Administrator

Administrator Fazekas spoke about Stormwater Management and our compliance with the NJDEP. We have to change our ordinance to be in compliance. That will be included in the agenda for next week's meeting for first reading and the second reading will be on the first meeting in February. That will put us in compliance with our Stormwater Management. This all has to be completed and submitted to the NJDEP in the beginning of March.

Administrator Fazekas stated that regarding the warehouse being built on Railroad Avenue, there have been some issues there where residents have emailed or called with complaints. We have worked with the owner and the Senior Project Manager and tomorrow morning should be the last concrete pour for their site. In discussions with some of the homeowners, they have brought up questions about berms and the owner is willing to come in and sit with him and the engineer to look this over and see if there is anything else we can do to help put some type of berm or something between our residents and that structure. Quite a few residents have expressed displeasure with the noise and at one point we actually shut the site down until they came into compliance. We have actively been dealing with this issue.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

None at this time.

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BOARD OF HEALTH

None at this time.

MISCELLANEOUS

None at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President Garganio opened the meeting to the public.

Mike Johnson, 103 Abrams Drive, thanked Council for the quick action regarding the work that occurred late into the evening and early morning hours on the Railroad Avenue project. He stated that the builders were out early in the morning today but that the work had ceased by 5:00pm. His concern is regarding the berm/wall because in their section of the development there is a 15' drop and from what he understands there is a 24' wall that is supposed to be put in. That would mean there is only 9' that would block the view from street level. He said they are only a couple of yards away from the site but they can now see the trains and hear them even more so than before. If the building is supposed to be 60' high then he would definitely like to talk about the possibility of the wall being higher. He also asked about the lights on the building and whether or not they will be shielded.

Administrator Fazekas said that all of the lights will be shielded once the project is complete. We received specs on the shields that have been turned over to the Construction Code Official to make sure that they will be applied to the building. He stated that the Code Official was out taking note of which of the lights need to be turned and the temporary lights that are currently up were turned. There is an ordinance where they are allowed to extend hours but when they did not follow the rules, the site got shut down until they were put into place.

Mr. Johnson asked that when there is an exception to the ordinance for extended periods of work hours, are the neighbors supposed to be notified. He stated that they had not received notification and, in his development, there are times when he can feel vibrations in his house and their windows rattle due to the machinery.

The Administrator stated that letters were sent out to the surrounding neighborhoods. He said he will check into whether or not his neighborhood was on the list of letters that had gone out. He does recall being contacted by residents of the development regarding what was in the letter.

Don Kamienski, 10 McCay Drive, asked Administrator Fazekas about whether or not there will be a water fountain on the "lake" next to the warehouse on Railroad Avenue. He stated that it will be a prime spot for geese.

Administrator Fazekas stated that he is unaware if there will be a fountain installed.

Mr. Kamienski also commented on the Mayor's PowerPoint presentation from the last meeting where he mentioned that Florence Township was a Covid testing site and he asked if the township will also be a vaccine site?

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Administrator Fazekas stated that Burlington County has been chosen as one of six mega sites in the state. The state has chosen the old Lord & Taylor building in the Moorestown Mall and that will become the vaccination site currently for the 1A group which included our police and firemen and the EMTs in town are being vaccinated at the fire academy. As of right now we have not been asked to be a site for administering the vaccine but we are set up and ready to go if they pick us to host a vaccine site and we would handle that the way we did the testing.

Kristan Marter, 220 East Front Street, spoke about the new warehouse they are constructing in Mansfield Township along the Heritage Trail. She stated that it is on the Northbound side of Route 130 and her concern is truck traffic. A traffic study performed in July of 2020, during the middle of Covid, showed that it would only impact the Hornberger Avenue intersection with 116 trips a day. Upon looking at it, they are only looking at northbound traffic but it has a real impact on us. The driveway is only requiring an acceleration lane and a deceleration lane on the northbound side. In order for any trucks to get in to the 610,000 square foot facility, southbound traffic is going to have to go past the warehouse and turn around. The next location for a turn around right now is Cedar Lane, which there are plans to enlarge and lengthen the jughandle there in order to accommodate more truck traffic, but then they have to turn around and come back. So, every northbound truck going to that facility is going to come through the Rite Aid intersection, whether they are coming off of the Turnpike or 295 or just coming up Route 130. And now every southbound truck is going to come through that intersection twice because they have to go south and turn around and come back. Or, they may follow their GPS and then end up travelling all through the town of Roebling like we were seeing before, trucks on Norman Avenue trying to get back onto to Hornberger Avenue to turn around.

Ms. Marter also talked about an article she read about the facility that is just past the Pennsylvania Turnpike overpass on River Road, on the left hand side. It was a facility that was leased by the Federal Government, it sits back off of the road and it was just purchased. It showed that the plan there is to knock that down and where we had one warehouse there will now be two. Going back to her question, she stated that back in 2017-2018 there was a committee that was put together that would bring together the Mayors of Burlington Township, Florence and Mansfield as well as Councilman Paul Ostrander, who was an engineer, in order to work together. She asked if that committee is still in place with the County and do we have any say in these projects, because they are really going to impact us.

Ms. Marter stated that she had met with Carol Murphy, some of the Mayors and Troy Singleton last year and there was conversation about doing something to incorporate right off of 295 via the Turnpike there are exit and entrance ramps to get them to Route 130 to help at least alleviate the Rite Aid intersection but that was a year ago. The meeting that she had with the County Engineers was in 2018 and we are getting further and further away with more and more building and Florence is sitting in here with all of these other townships with land and wanting to do whatever they feel like and now we are suffering from that. She understands that there are ordinances in place for the two Griffin projects so that they will not come through town but there is no signage so the ordinance is only as good as it is being able to be enforced so that people know that it is in place. She asked about having a conversation with Burlington Township about having the same ordinances in place as we have with Griffin with these facilities that are butting right up to our township.

Mayor Wilkie explained that the Jones Farm in Mansfield Township was not included when the site plan was done in terms of Florence-Columbus Road and Route 130. When he reached out to Mark Remsa at the county, he said that there is limited activity with what the county can do because it is on Route 130. He said that the NJDOT is the agency will have to rely upon to get help. So while they made that approval locally at Mansfield Township, he thinks they still need to get NJDOT approval which may require them to do more than what they show on their plan.

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Last year, Council sent out a letter objecting to the project to the Burlington County Planning Board, NJDOT and the Department of Community Affairs and copied the Mansfield Township Committee and pointed out that truck traffic would have no other choice to get there when coming from north heading southbound and the only place for a truck to make a turn around is Cedar Lane. They said they will probably not do that, instead they will use 295 from Florence Columbus Road and they will come up on Route 130. We asked that this project not move forward or be permitted until they take care of Florence Columbus Road and Route 130. We have not heard back from anyone regarding this. Mayor Wilkie stated that he would supply Ms. Marter a copy of the letter.

Mansfield Township has not worked with us. He said a letter was sent two years ago to Burlington Township, Burlington City and the County and copied Mansfield Township telling them that Florence Township will not extend utilities to any building in Mansfield Township until the Florence Columbus Road and Route 130 intersection is taken care of. They told him that he was inappropriately trying to restrict them but that they are moving forward with a design. There was a meeting with NJDOT a month or two ago and they have a design that they agreed to that will help temporarily fix Florence Columbus and Route 130. They were supposed to make that public on January 1 but we still have not seen it. Once it comes out and it is approved by NJDOT they will then transfer it to Burlington County and try and get the funding. He says “temporarily” because it is a phasing project. Phase 1 will bring immediate help on Route 130 and Florence Columbus Road. Phase 2 will create a bypass around Florence Columbus Road. There is no direct access from the Turnpike to 295, it will create a new road behind Birch Hollow in order to get that traffic away from there.

We are working with Burlington City and Burlington Township concerning those projects on River Road. When Covid hit things slowed down at NJDOT, and so the last meetings did not include either of the two Burlingtons. But he was most recently made aware of the GSA warehouse (that is the building she mentioned). He believes that in the transportation study that the county did a couple of years ago, that site was included. He doesn't know if it was to take the existing building but he doesn't believe the idea of tearing the existing building down was in there. The bypass that Burlington Township has proposed just across the creek will help us. Burlington Township is trying to get those developers along there to help support paying for the construction of the bypass.

Administrator Fazekas added that on the Carson property that Ms. Marter mentioned, which is on our side of the Turnpike bridge, the same ordinances are in place in Burlington Township that there is to be no right turn coming in to Florence Township. The GSA project has just been brought to our attention; it did sell and he is unaware if they are for sure going to do the two warehouses or leave the existing warehouse and expand it. As of Monday, he does not have anything definite on that. That will be something that can be relayed to Burlington Township and we can ask them to impose the same ordinance if they are building those warehouses.

Kristan Marter asked if signage is the county's responsibility so that the trucks know if they make the wrong turn they are subject to being fined or is that something that we and Burlington Township are responsible for?

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Administrator Fazekas explained that signage will be done by both builders, that is a requirement to them getting their Certificate of Occupancy ("CO"). IPT East only has a temporary CO to do some work inside, they do not have a CO and before the one is issued, they do have to have all signage in place. That will be the same for the Carson property as well. He also stated that he has had numerous meetings with the owners and they are well aware of the ordinances in place and they have made their drivers well aware. If he sees trucks coming through town and they are followed back there, he will be talking to them again. He has spoken to the Burlington Township engineer, Scott Hatfield, several times when we had an issue with their dump trucks coming in and out of there and they have also been advised of the ordinances.

Seeing no one else wishing to be heard, motion of Ostrander, seconded by Sandusky to close the public comment portion of the meeting. Voice vote – All ayes.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to adjourn to Closed Session at 7:37 p.m. where no action will be taken. Voice vote – all ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

Council returned to the Regular meeting at 8:08 p.m. No action was taken. Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Sandusky to adjourn. Voice vote – all ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
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